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A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents

Cecil D. Sanderson

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A GUIDE FOR THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW
OF COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS

BY

CECIL D. SANDERSON

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Science, and is acceptable as meeting the thesis requirements for this degree, but without implying that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Thesis Advisor

Head of the Major Department

A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Science, Department of
Economics, South Dakota State
College of Agriculture
and Mechanic Arts

January, 1964

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A special thanks is due my wife, Grace Sanderson, for the many hours she spent typing and proofreading in connection with this thesis.

CHAPTER V

CDS

EVALUATION OF THE DOCUMENT

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John T. Stone, "Your Job is Real," New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
Ext. Cir. 510, VI, Cooperative Extension Service: 6201,
Brooklyn, N. Y., 1961.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Situation

Lincoln D. Kelsey and Cannon C. Hearne commence their book, Cooperative Extension Work, with this definition of Extension Work:

Extension work is an out-of-school system of education in which adults and young people learn by doing.

It is a partnership between the government, the land-grant colleges, and the people, which provides service and education designed to meet the needs of the people.

Its fundamental objective is the development of the people.¹

The statements by Kelsey and Hearne are further emphasized by John T. Stone, Director of the Cooperative Extension Service, South Dakota State College. Director Stone points out that Extension's primary function is education. It is off-campus education directed to helping people solve problems and realize opportunities which they encounter from day to day. The guiding principle of Extension workers is helping people to help themselves.²

The job of the county extension agent is far more comprehensive than that of serving as a source of current and technical

¹Lincoln D. Kelsey, Cannon C. Hearne, Cooperative Extension Work, p2, Comstock Publishing Associates: Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, New York, 1955.

²John T. Stone, "Your Job in Ext.," Your Appointment, Ext. Cir. 610, p7, Cooperative Extension Service: SDSC, Brookings, S. D., 1961.

information. County agents are teachers. Quality of education depends on quality of teachers. A teacher's qualification depends on preparation, training and a continual evaluation of performance. The purpose of this thesis is to develop an instrument to improve and facilitate teaching by county agents. The use of this instrument will indicate needed training, and hence serve as a guide in planning professional improvement programs.

Agriculture is a major source of wealth in South Dakota. The state's economic position rests largely on the health, vigor, efficiency and flexibility of its various agricultural enterprises. The rapid technological changes taking place in the production of agricultural crops and in the processing and distribution of agricultural products necessitates that the producers of these crops keep informed and adjust in accordance with the most current information in order to succeed.³ If South Dakota's farmers are to remain competitive with other areas producing similar agricultural products and if they are to produce such products efficiently enough to afford them an acceptable standard of living, they must know and use applicable research findings.

Informing farmers and their families of current and useful technical information affecting their welfare is an important job

³"Efficiency in Agriculture Production," A Guide to Extension Programs for the Future, p4, Ext. Committee on Organization and Policy: North Carolina State College, July 1959.

of the Cooperative Extension Service. The increasingly complex situations facing farmers in planning their operation requires that the county extension agent likewise be increasingly proficient in his task of disseminating the latest findings of research to residents of the county in which he works. E. T. York, Jr., states that:

The rapid development of new knowledge in all fields and the demands for more specialized assistance emphasizes the absolute necessity for maintaining high levels of professional competence in subject matter. This will require higher levels and more specialized training, along with never-ending study and self improvement.⁴

The accelerated use of technology in agriculture has created and is creating problems in the area of public affairs and agricultural policy. A few current examples are school reorganization, South Dakota tax structure, water resources development and policies relating to government price support programs of farm commodities. Providing accurate and unbiased information to the public in these often controversial areas requires that county extension agents be well informed. They must understand the techniques of disseminating information on issues of agricultural policy if they are to be effective.

Today's county extension agent must be capable of providing leadership training as well as being technically informed regarding

⁴E. T. York, Jr., "The Professional and His Journal," Journal of Cooperative Extension, Vol. 1, 6, Ext. Journal, Inc.: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., Spring 1963.

major agricultural enterprises and industries in his county.

Leadership training requires an understanding of the sociological and psychological factors involved. To develop competency in these many fields, county extension agents must receive more in-service training so that they are capable of providing the leadership required of them.

PROBLEM

Before preparing the instrument involved in this thesis, the writer initiated a conference of state administration staff members to learn their thinking regarding the scope and nature of agent training needs. Involvement of supervisory staff members was important as all supervisors were expected to use the instrument to be developed in reviewing the performance of agents in their respective districts. It was the consensus of the supervisory staff that the following were the major problems and needs:

1. There is a need for greater understanding by county extension agents as to their educational role and the nature of their job.
2. The individual training needs of agents must be ascertained and continual improvements made if agents are to perform to their maximum capacity.
3. Agents need to give greater attention to evaluating the effectiveness of their extension methods, programs and activities.
4. Supervisors need to become better acquainted with the agents and their respective county programs which he or she supervises.

A basic problem is how to teach and train county extension agents so that they are competent and effective in fulfilling their current, educational role. This problem is complicated by a gradual increase in the number and complexity of the tasks agents are expected to perform. In addition, the role of the agent is gradually changing from one of providing leadership and teaching people directly to one of identifying, developing and teaching leaders.

The fact that the agent trains local leaders instead of doing direct teaching of 4H club members, or other lay people, places him at a higher level of professional work--he is teaching the trainer or training the teacher, however he wants to look at it. As a person rises in professional ability in educational work, he moves from teaching somebody directly to teaching the person who teaches directly.⁵

The constantly increasing load county extension agents are expected to carry necessitates that they rely more and more on lay leaders. As mentioned by Sabrosky above, leadership training and supervision requires greater professional ability. Keeping county extension staff members trained to effectively cope with their expanding educational role is an administrative responsibility.

The performance review instrument developed in this thesis was designed and worded to help solve the problems or mitigate the needs outlined by the supervisory staff at the start of this study. A review of the agent's performance relating to separate programs and activities served to identify areas of needed training.

A discussion outline of the nature and scope of an agent's job appears at the forepart of each of the 46 areas of activities included in the Review instrument. Using this outline, the supervisor discussed the meaning and implications of each area of activity until he was satisfied that the agent had a good understanding of the nature and scope of his job.

⁵Laurel K. Sabrosky, "Role of the Agent in Leader Training," Journal of Cooperative Extension, 31, Ext. Journal, Inc.: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc.

The instrument, in effect, attempted to outline "what ought to be." The supervisors and the agents discussed the agent's present program. The net result was an evaluation of existing county programs, activities and methods.

The individual performance review of agents by the supervisors provided an excellent opportunity for the supervisor to become better acquainted with the agents in his district and with their respective programs.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this thesis was to develop an instrument for evaluating the performance of county extension agents. Through the use of this instrument, a more thorough and effective training and teaching program for county extension agents can also be developed.

Although the primary objective of this thesis was to develop an instrument for reviewing the performance of county extension agents, the instrument was used extensively and its effectiveness evaluated. The evaluation results are a part of this thesis.

Statewide use of this instrument and the initiation of training programs suggested from information secured from the performance review is expected to increase the performance and the effectiveness of county extension agents.

A major objective in the design of the instrument was to develop it in such a way as to motivate the agent to improve his performance. Dr. Alton C. Johnson, an authority on the subject of personnel appraisal, has this to say about the role of motivation in appraising the performance of personnel:

The modern psychological approach to personnel appraisal is to consider its basic purpose to be a motivating procedure. If we can determine the employee's present level of performance and then show him how the quality and quantity of his work can be improved, we have gone a long way in implementing the concepts surrounding

motivation. When the employee knows what is expected of him, he is often self motivated toward improvement.⁶

The procedure for reaching the stated objective was as follows:

1. Personnel appraisal forms in use by Extension Services in other states were secured, studied and evaluated.
2. Professional Improvement and Evaluation committees of the South Dakota County Agents Association and the South Dakota Home Demonstration Agents Association studied and evaluated personnel appraisal techniques and the sample forms secured from other states. The purpose of this step was to secure the ideas, suggestions and opinions of representative agents.
3. The writer reviewed personnel appraisal techniques and forms with District Extension Supervisors to ascertain their thinking as to the type of an instrument which would be most effective in attaining the stated objectives. The writer also reviewed with the supervisors the essential elements to be included in the Performance Review Guide and the guidelines to be followed in writing it.
4. A suggested guide was prepared for the performance review of county extension agents. The guide was based upon the ideas, suggestions and guidelines secured from the group mentioned above. Many classifications and arrangement ideas for the review sections were secured from appraisal instruments being used in different states. Major criticism was placed on a performance review instrument secured from the Oklahoma Extension Service.
5. District Extension Supervisors studied the suggested guide section by section at group conferences. Many alterations, additions and deletions were made.

⁶Alton C. Johnson, "Philosophy and Purpose of Personnel Appraisal," Personnel Appraisal and Job Description in Extension Supervision, p8, Selected Papers Presented at Northeast Ext. Conference on Supervision: Nat'l. 4H Club Center, Washington, D. C., 1960.

PROCEDURE

The procedure for reaching the stated objective was as follows:

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5. District Extension Supervisors studied the suggested Guide section by section at group conferences. Many alterations, additions and deletions were made.
6. The Guide, including changes suggested by the supervisors, was reviewed in detail by the Professional Improvement and Evaluation Committees of the state's county and home agents' associations.

7. The recommendations received from the two agent committees mentioned above were reviewed by the supervisory staff. A major portion of the recommendations made by the agents was acceptable to the supervisory staff.
8. The final copy of the Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents was presented to the State Extension Evaluation and Professional Improvement committee for their approval. It was unanimously approved.
9. The Guide was printed and made ready for use.
10. The supervisors discussed and agreed on the mechanics and methods relating to the use of the Guide.
11. Each supervisor reviewed the Performance of his or her agents with the use of the approved and printed "Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents."
12. Agents whose performance was reviewed were requested to fill out an evaluation questionnaire regarding their experience with the instrument.
13. The evaluation questionnaire was summarized and interpreted.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. County Extension Agents. As used in this thesis, county extension agents refers to either home demonstration agent or county agricultural agent. County extension agent is used synonymously with county extension worker, county extension staff member or just agent.
2. District Extension Supervisor. An administrative staff member of a state extension office whose primary duty is that of supervising county extension staff members within an assigned area or district. This term is synonymous to the word supervisor used in this thesis.
3. Professional Improvement. As used here, this term has general reference to ways and means whereby county extension agents can and do improve themselves professionally. This may involve such activities as formal course work, a study tour or the reading of books of a professional improvement nature.
4. A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents. This is the title of the instrument developed in this thesis. For the sake of brevity, the instrument will be referred to as Guide, Review or Instrument throughout this thesis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It was stated in the previous chapter that part of the objective of this study was to develop an instrument useful in training and developing county extension agents. The use of a formal instrument for purposes of evaluating the performance of extension personnel is commonly referred to as personnel appraisal.

Personnel appraisal is a process which is being used more and more in the Cooperative Extension Service to determine the contribution, or, in some cases, the potential contribution of staff members to the organization.⁷

Harold M. McNeill's study of 16 states using formal appraisal instruments revealed that four purposes were given by State Extension Directors as the most important reasons for using some form of formal appraisal. They are (1) training, (2) salary adjustments, (3) promotion, and (4) professional improvement.⁸

At the start of the study some thought was given to designing the Instrument to serve as a tool for adjusting salaries and ascertaining promotions as well as an agent training and professional

⁷Alton C. Johnson, Roy D. Cassell, Appraising Personnel in the Cooperative Extension Service, p7, Nat'l. Agri. Ext. Center for Advance Study: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., 1962.

⁸Harold M. McNeill, "Analysis of Factors Used in Formal Appraisal of County Extension Personnel," unpublished M. S. thesis: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., p88, 1960.

improvement tool. Harold M. McNeill points out in his study of formal appraisal instruments that experience in industry suggests ultimate failure to those appraisal programs that are of multi-purpose design.⁹

Items one and four as listed above are concerned with assisting the employee in performing his work, whereas the second and third relate to personnel action. Items one and four, training and professional improvement respectively, are the major concern of this study.

In the conclusions of a study made by H. E. Chambers concerning the evaluation methods used by 14 states, Mr. Chambers states, "This study has shown that the county agent's performance in the field is by far the most important factor relating to the effectiveness of extension work."¹⁰ The Instrument which has been developed is designed to improve agent performance in the field.

George B. Strother, in his discussion of factors or traits on which to base ratings, states:

It is possible to judge performance on a reasonably objective basis. And so the trend has been, more and more, toward basing evaluation of personnel on performance characteristics which can be observed equally

⁹Ibid., p89.

¹⁰H. E. Chambers, "Methods Which State Agriculture Extension Service Employ in Evaluating County Agriculture Agents," unpublished M. S. thesis: Okla. State Univ., Stillwater, Okla., Chap. IV, 1960.

well by various observers, and which are not affected by a person's own attitudes and feelings.¹¹

The writer reviewed personnel appraisal forms from twelve states and in most cases was able to secure accompanying evaluation comments relative to the instruments' use in the state from which it originated. Notes were taken from these comments and reviewed from time to time during the preparation of the Instrument. Caution was taken to avoid shortcomings indicated by staff members commenting on their state's instrument.

A few fundamentals or guidelines relative to personnel appraisal, as noted by D. R. Troyer, were observed from the start of this study. They are:

1. Administrators, supervisors and agents must be interested and sold on formal appraisal.
2. Effective administration of formal appraisal must be provided.
3. Supervisors must understand the entire program.
4. Instructions on how to do appraisal must be clear and explicit.
5. Agents must be informed both as to when they are to be rated and the results.
6. Appraisal should be done primarily on job performance.

¹¹George B. Strother, "Psychological Blocks to Personnel Appraisal, "Personnel Appraisal and Job Description in Extension Supervision, p20, Agri. Ext. Center for Advanced Study: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., 1961.

7. Adequate training must be provided for those doing the rating.¹²

Johnson and Cassell suggest some additions to Troyer's list of fundamentals: the rating plan should be thoughtfully and skillfully designed; the rating plan should be geared to the organizations' own needs; there should be criteria to aid in judgements; the rating program should be flexible and the rating system must be reliable.¹³

Alton C. Johnson also stresses the importance of training and performance as a basis for personnel appraisal in commenting that practically all of the appraisal instruments in effect since 1956 were designed to increase the agents' understanding of the job; improve level of performance; increase satisfaction on the job and to help supervisors and administrators be more effective in working with personnel.¹⁴

According to Johnson and Cassell there are nine recognized kinds of personnel appraisal instruments in use today. They are (1) ranking, (2) paired comparison, (3) man-to-man comparison, (4) graphic

¹²D. R. Troyer, "A Personnel Appraisal Technique," Personnel Appraisal and Job Description in Extension Supervision, p35, Selected Papers, Northeastern Ext. Conference on Supervision: Nat'l. Agri. Center for Advanced Study, Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., 1961.

¹³Johnson and Cassell, op. cit., p16.

¹⁴Alton C. Johnson, "Personnel Appraisal in Extension Personnel and Job Description of Extension Supervision," p24, Selected Papers, Northeastern Ext. Conference on Supervision: Univ. of Wisc., Madison, Wisc., 1961.

rating scales, (5) check list, (6) forced distribution, (7) forced choice, (8) critical incident, and (9) program review method.¹⁵

A brief explanation as given, in part, by Johnson and Cassell of the nine methods mentioned above is as follows:

The ranking method is accomplished by the agents' supervisor. It requires that the supervisor rank his agents on the basis of the relative ability of agents to perform their respective jobs.

The paired comparison method is a refinement of the ranking procedure. It involves comparing or pairing each county agent with other agents performing a similar job. For each pair of names, the rater or supervisor indicates the individual whom he considers to be doing the best job. A check and tally system is employed which results in an index of relative performance of all agents in a given district.

The man-to-man comparison method involves the development of a master scale for each criterion of performance against which the agents are to be evaluated. The supervisor locates an identifiable individual who exemplifies each of the degrees of each criterion, thereby developing a master scale. Each agent is compared with the master scale and given the numerical rating of the individual on the scale whom he most nearly resembles relative to the performance criterion being appraised.

Results of the agents in question. The results of the exper-

¹⁵Johnson and Cassell, op.cit., p37.

The graphic rating scales method involves the establishment of a series of criteria which has relevance to the county agent's job. Each criterion is accompanied by a scale suitable for evaluating the extent to which the agent performs the particular subject being evaluated. The supervisor checks along the scale for the degree which most closely represents the employee's performance.

The check list method of personnel appraisal consists of a list of words, phrases, questions or statements descriptive of the manner in which the agent might perform his job. A simple yes or no answer is usually required for each statement or item.

The forced distribution method in effect forces the rater to make definite decisions. The supervisor is forced to distribute his ratings of agents according to a predetermined system. The ratings are usually required to form a normal distribution curve. Criteria with varying dimensions are used as a basis on which to designate ratings. The forced distribution method overcomes the tendency of raters to rate the majority of the employees in the "average" group.

The forced choice method was designed to reduce biases which have been identified as inherent weaknesses of most appraisal systems. This is accomplished by forcing the rater to choose from among a set of statements, usually a block of five which are most descriptive of the agents in question. The results of the supervisor's evaluations are scored by a person other than the rater.

The scoring key is not known by the evaluating supervisor.

The critical incident method consists of a collection of reports of behavior which are important in the sense that they differentiate between success and failure on the job. The supervisor reporting the incident must know the aims and objectives of the worker in the situation, otherwise he cannot judge whether or not the agent is performing his job satisfactorily. In addition, the supervisor must use clear-cut criteria if he is to discern whether or not a particular incident is critical. An incident is considered critical if it is related to an important phase of the work and includes a behavior pattern which results in more or less effective job performance. Weights in the form of numbers are assigned to each of several incidents relating to a given criterion.

The program review method involves the agent in the preparation of the instrument itself. The agent and supervisor, in conferences, determine the goals the agent hopes to accomplish during the coming year. The major work areas or program responsibilities are analyzed, goals established, and certain measurable terms or criteria are agreed upon to be used in evaluating performance results. Categories for measuring accomplishments are established, such as "excellent," "average" and "below average." At the completion of the appraisal period, the supervisor and agent discuss the employee's contribution in terms of the established standard of performance agreed upon at the beginning.

Any given instrument need not possess the characteristics of only one method. It might well contain features of two or more different kinds of instruments. The instrument, "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents," prepared as a part of this thesis is a combination of methods number four and nine, graphic rating scale and program review, respectively.

The advantages and disadvantages of these two methods or kinds of instruments used in personnel appraisal as indicated by Johnson and Cassell¹⁶ appear below. The advantages of the graphic rating scales method are:

1. A number of different criteria can be included in the same instrument.
2. Instructions can be given the person doing the appraising to consider all possible degrees in evaluating the employee.
3. It is possible to establish various degrees of performance which are realistic and more closely represent the operating situation.
4. More people are accustomed to using this type of approach to appraisal.
5. It is possible to be more specific when discussing appraisal results with employees.

The disadvantages of the graphic rating scales method are:

1. Considerable time and energy must be expended in developing the method.
2. There is a tendency to make the instrument very long so that all possible criteria are included.

¹⁶Ibid., p43.

3. It is difficult to assemble all of the criteria and develop suitable degree explanations.
4. The errors of central tendency, halo and leniency are very likely to be present.

The advantages of the program review method are:

1. The employee plays an important role in establishing goals, and therefore is more receptive to the evaluation program.
2. It promotes self-evaluation among the employees.
3. It provides for an appraisal interview as a vital part of the process.
4. It requires that the supervisor evaluate the employee on definite goals which tend to promote more objectivity in the observation of behavior.
5. The method involves the development of mutually acceptable standards between the employee and supervisor.

The disadvantages of the program review method are:

1. Unless properly planned, the interview may be more damaging than helpful in promoting more efficient performance.
2. It may present a change in procedure and this change may be viewed as threatening by the employee.

Involvement of both supervisors and agents in the preparation, use and evaluation of this instrument resulted in understanding and co-operation throughout the course of this thesis. Morale was high among those involved. Agents, generally, were not apprehensive concerning the approaching performance review. John F. Pfiffner defines morale as a "complex combination of factors that cause

people to do, or fail to do, those things that the organization expects of them."¹⁷

A review of literature would not be complete without acknowledging the contribution in the form of ideas and general instrument outline received from Alvin Harold Casey's doctoral thesis relating to Performance Review of County Extension Agents.¹⁸ Mr. Casey completed his thesis on this subject in furtherance of his doctorate from Oklahoma State University in 1961.

¹⁷ John M. Pfiffner, "Motivation and Incentives," The Supervision of Personnel, p237, Prentice-Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, N. J.

¹⁸ Casey, A. Harold, "The Development and Evaluation of an Instrument for the Performance Review of Co. Ext. Agents," published doctorate thesis: Okla. State Univ., Stillwater, Okla., 1961.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

No personnel appraisal forms of the nature of this instrument were discovered in the State Extension files to serve as a guide or aid in the preparation of a personnel appraisal instrument for South Dakota.

Publications and conference reports dealing with personnel appraisal were collected. Personnel appraisal instruments in use in twelve other states were secured and reviewed. In most cases, Extension administrators from these states submitted statements concerning the merits and shortcomings of the instruments provided. These statements served to supplement information presented in textbooks and articles of a theoretical nature pertaining to personnel performance techniques.

A frequent comment of state administrative staff members of Extension Services of other states, when commenting on the preparation and use of their respective personnel appraisal instrument, was that personnel with whom the instrument was to be used should be involved extensively in its preparation. The major reason, it appears, for involving agents in the preparation of the instrument is to create understanding, acceptance, and, where elements of training and professional improvement are involved, adoption of the corrective measures indicated. Suspicion and even fear,

according to comments of administrators, might well replace understanding where involvement and participation in the preparation of an appraisal instrument is wanting. When suspicion and mistrust replaced cooperation and confidence, the morale of the Extension Service deteriorated. The general suggestions were to proceed slowly and involve all extension personnel concerned, or their representatives, in the study and preparation of the instrument.

County extension agents were involved and used in the selection and preparation of the Instrument. This was accomplished at a joint meeting with the Professional Improvement committees of the County Agricultural Agent's Association and the County Home Demonstration Agent's Association. Representatives of the two agents' associations were receptive to the appraisal idea. They favored the program review and graphic scale methods of personnel appraisal. The areas of agreement and recommendations secured from these two committees were reviewed with state administrative staff members.

During these conferences several guidelines or essential elements were suggested or adopted which supervisors and agents felt should be incorporated into a performance review instrument. These essential elements or guidelines are:

1. The extension supervisor who is to review county agent's performance should have a thorough understanding of a county extension agent's job.

2. The reviewing supervisor should be acquainted with the program of agents whose performance is being reviewed.
3. An agent's performance in each area of responsibility should be reviewed separately.
4. The confidence and self-respect of the agent should be respected and protected during and following the performance review.
5. Review of an agent's performance should be accomplished periodically to ascertain degree of progress.
6. The review of an agent's performance should be so conducted as to reveal both the agent's strong and weak areas of performance.
7. The review of the agent's performance should be conducted in such a manner as to permit the agent to make an honest, self-analysis of his own performance and program as compared with established standards of performance.
8. The reviewing supervisor should emphasize job performance rather than evaluate personal characteristics or traits.
9. Performance review of county extension agents should be recognized and accepted by the administration as an integral part of county program supervision.
10. Performance review should cover the extension year just passed. It should be accomplished as soon as possible after the close of the extension year.

Utilizing the accumulated information and guidelines, the first edition of "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents" was prepared by the writer. The county extension agent's job was divided into seven areas for performance review. The areas selected were as follows:

- I. Public Relations
- II. Office Management
- III. Professional Improvement
- IV. Developing the County Program
- V. Carrying Out the Annual Plan of Work
- VI. Evidence of Effective Educational Work
- VII. Working Relationships

Several more conferences were held with District Extension Supervisors and agent association committees before the final edition was ready for the printer.

During the course of discussing and reworking this instrument with state and county extension staff members in readiness for printing and ultimate use, various comments regarding "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents" were recorded. Here are the advantages as viewed by and received from the work groups during the various discussions:

1. The instrument is based on accomplishments of program objectives.
2. The instrument is job performance orientated.
3. It has motivation as its underlying basis--morale should be increased.
4. The instrument provides an opportunity for the supervisor to learn the agent's program first hand.
5. It is an excellent training aid.
6. The agent learns what is expected of him.

7. The instrument possesses the motivation stimuli of self-appraisal.
8. The discussion between supervisor and agent during the review causes areas of strength and weaknesses to be identified.
9. The agent has an opportunity for securing from the supervisor suggestions for strengthening weak areas in his county program.
10. The instrument is relatively free of bias. It is based on actual performance.
11. The face to face discussion type of interview between agent and supervisor enhances communication and understanding.
12. The instrument is easily understood by the agent and the supervisor.
13. It helps an agent learn the what, why and how of his job.
14. It causes the agent to become aware of in-service training needs.
15. The instrument can be made applicable to both home agent and agricultural agent.
16. It takes into account county differences--counties are not compared.
17. Execution of the instrument involves a minimum number of people as only the agent and the supervisor are involved.
18. It provides a systematic means of analyzing all phases of the county programs.
19. Only a small amount of training of the rater is required.
20. The agent and the supervisor get to know each other better.
21. It provides an opportunity for the supervisor to suggest needed changes.

22. It provides an opportunity for the agent to present personal problems and/or county programs.

The disadvantages recorded from the work groups during the various discussions were:

1. The use of the Instrument is very time consuming for the supervisor.
2. It is not well adapted as an aid to making personnel decisions.
3. The criteria are not equally suitable to all counties.
4. It is not well suited for evaluating the performance of assistant and associate agents as they are not normally responsible for county extension programs.

The instrument, "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents," appeared for use from the printing department of South Dakota State College as Extension Circular 614.

The supervisors decided to conduct preliminary interviews using this instrument to determine: (1) agreement on methods and procedures to use in conducting the review and (2) rating standards and their implications.

The agents who were to participate in the preliminary interviews were selected carefully. These agents, one relatively new and the other experienced, aided the supervisors in evaluating the instrument. They provided suggestions for conducting interviews with other agents.

The preliminary interviews served to lend greater uniformity and understanding in the use of the instrument. In general, the supervisors were well pleased with the instrument, as were the

agents whose performance had been reviewed. The major drawback seemed to be the relatively large amount of time required to review an agent's performance. Supervisors agreed that five to seven hours would be required to review the performance of an agent. The pre-test use of the Guide resulted in the supervisors agreeing to several needed changes and deletions from the instrument before reviewing the performance of other agents.

December 1, 1964, the period during which most of the performance reviews took place was in conformity with the tenth essential element previously mentioned which reads: "Performance review should cover the calendar year just passed. It should be completed as soon as possible after the close of the calendar year."

Each supervisor scheduled the performance review with their agents well in advance of the time of the review. Supervisors suggested to the agents that uninterrupted privacy would be very advantageous during the period of the review. Since the preliminary interview experience indicated that five to seven hours were needed to conduct the performance review, agents were requested to allow the entire day for the review.

The supervisors chose not to send the agent a copy of the Guide in advance of the review. It was felt that, in the absence of preliminary discussion as to the purposes and objectives, agents might approach the review with preconceived attitudes which might diminish the instrument's effectiveness. The agent was asked, however,

CHAPTER IV

PROCESS USED IN PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The instrument was printed and available for use by June 1962. The supervisors mutually agreed to complete performance reviews with agents in their respective districts by February 1, 1963. County Extension programs are normally completed by December 1, so the period during which most of the performance reviews took place was in conformity with the tenth essential element previously mentioned which reads: "Performance review should cover the extension year just passed. It should be accomplished as soon as possible after the close of the extension year."

Each supervisor scheduled the performance review with their agents well in advance of the time of the review. Supervisors suggested to the agents that uninterrupted privacy would be very advantageous during the period of the review. Since the preliminary interview experience indicated that five to seven hours were needed to conduct the performance review, agents were requested to allot the entire day for the review.

The supervisors chose not to send the agent a copy of the Guide in advance of the review. It was felt that, in the absence of preliminary discussions as to the purposes and objectives, agents might commence the review with erroneous attitudes which might mitigate the instrument's effectiveness. The agent was asked, however,

to have ready access to the county's annual plan of work, annual report, and their county 4H records.

Only the agent and his immediate supervisor were present during the performance review. The agent was given a copy of the performance review instrument at the start of the review session. The supervisor, likewise, provided himself with a copy. The supervisor explained at the start that both copies were to be filled out identically. The agent kept his copy and the supervisor's copy became a part of the agent's file at the state office. At the outset a thorough discussion was conducted by the supervisor of the guide preliminaries which included: the purpose of the review; essential elements or guidelines applicable to the preparation and use of the instrument; areas of job performance to be reviewed; basic concepts of extension work; directions for using the guide; and explanation of the ranking structure numbers. Ample opportunity was provided for questions by the agent.

One successful method for reviewing the sections was to have the agent read and comment on the established standard of performance appearing above the rating structure. The rating structure is the line toward the center of the section's write-up on which the rating number appears and below which is located the "below average," "average," and "above average" criteria paragraphs. Before leaving this section, the supervisor assured himself that the agent thoroughly understood the standards of performance expected of the agent.

The supervisor then read the criteria paragraphs below the line graph, made applicable comments and explanations and assumed the initiative in gaining an agreement with the agent as to the most appropriate rating number to encircle. In order for the supervisor and the agent to arrive at an accurate and fair rating, it became necessary for the supervisor to acquire a good understanding of the agent's programs and activities in the area under consideration. Questions and discussion were the primary communication methods of gaining understanding.

The supervisor also assumed the initiative in recording remarks which could serve as a check on progress at a later date. Also, the remarks could be so written as to serve as a goal for the agent. It should be remembered that, for all practical purposes, the supervisor's copy of the guide and the agent's copy were identical--including the "remarks."

The application of this instrument might best be explained by reproducing and commenting on one section of "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents." Section four below, a part of the Public Relations area of Performance, will be used as an example.

This section, headed "Handles Public Affairs Wisely," appears in the Guide as follows:

Extension has an important obligation in the area of public affairs and a responsibility to help people understand and become interested in broad policy issues such as

agricultural programs, taxation, adequate school program, home economics, and related fields which affect them. In so doing, however, it should be very clear that Extension's function is not policy determination. Rather, its function is to adequately equip the people it serves, through educational processes, to analyze issues involved on the basis of all available facts. It is the prerogative and responsibility of people themselves, individually or collectively, to make their own decisions on public or agricultural policy issues and express them as they see fit. The agent will assist in securing factual information but he must not take sides in the discussion. He remains neutral and permits his people to arrive at conclusions based on presented factual information and weighed against their respective basic values and experiences.¹⁹

In most cases the agent read aloud the above standard of performances and/or areas of activity explanation. Generally, a discussion followed the reading of this section. The discussion resulted from the agent asking clarification questions of the supervisor or from comments by the supervisor to make certain that the agent fully understood the material covered.

When the supervisor was satisfied that the agent thoroughly understood the standard of performance area the rating portion was taken up. The following is a continuation of section four of the Public Relations area of the Instrument.

¹⁹"A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents," Cooperative Ext. Service, South Dakota State College, Brookings, S. D., Extension Circular 614, 1962.

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Below Average		Average			Above Average	
Avoids as much as possible public affairs topics, or shows prejudice.		Provides factual information and guidance in discussing public affairs topics when asked or consulted.			Provides opportunity for the dissemination of factual information on public affairs subjects of particular concern to the people. Prepares background information and assists in outlining constructive alternatives. Does not take sides, express his personal views, or otherwise get adversely involved in controversial public policy issues.	

Remarks _____

20

The supervisor usually read aloud and discussed the above rating criteria paragraphs. Normally, it was necessary for the supervisor to ask several questions in connection with the rating criteria to ascertain the degree to which the agent fulfilled or excelled the three narrated criteria areas. The rating number was encircled and hence, the agent's rating in this area of extension activity was by mutual agreement of the two parties.

When all sections of the Guide had been reviewed, the "Performance Profile," which is the last page of the guide, was completed. The graph made by the profile usually merited an evaluation

²⁰Ibid., p7.

discussion between the supervisor and the agent. This graph served as an opportunity for the supervisor to compliment and comment on the agent's areas of outstanding performance. By the same token, it was a most appropriate time to discuss areas which needed improvement.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the training and development program for the agents. The study was designed to determine the effectiveness of the training and development program for the agents. The study was designed to determine the effectiveness of the training and development program for the agents.

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CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

A main reason for developing and using this guide for the performance review of county extension agents was to develop a tool or instrument useful in training and developing county extension agents. It should increase the capabilities and effectiveness of agents such that those they teach, directly or indirectly, are more capable of adapting quickly and accurately to the changing world around them.

A decision made after making the initial performance review was to conduct the performance review of county extension agents every other year. The evaluation survey was conducted in order to make improvements in the Guide.

The objectives of this thesis mentioned in the introduction of the performance review guide served as guidelines in developing the evaluation questionnaire.

A letter, dated February 4, 1963, and an accompanying evaluation questionnaire were sent to all agents who had been interviewed in relation to the instrument. The letter appears as Appendix A. The evaluation questionnaire is Appendix B.

The district extension supervisors indicated that they reviewed the performance of 92 county extension agents. Seventy-seven county agents and home agents returned questionnaires. Agents

Question No. 2. Did you feel the Performance Review was

very helpful _____ (20%)
 helpful _____ (77%)
 or of no help _____ (3%)

as a media for introducing and discussing county programs and activities?

It is encouraging to observe that a big majority of the agents rated the instrument "helpful" or "very helpful" as a medium for introducing and discussing their programs with their supervisor. This is an important question as county extension programs and activities are closely associated with performance.

Question No. 3. Did you feel that the Performance Review was

very helpful _____ (19%)
 helpful _____ (72%)
 or of no help _____ (9%)

as a medium for introducing and discussing personal problems relating to your work?

An Extension supervisor often needs a diplomatic "in" for discussing personal problems of agents that are adversely affecting the county's extension program. This instrument provides such an "in." It can be quite embarrassing to both supervisor and agent when it becomes necessary for a supervisor to approach an agent bluntly regarding a matter which has been reducing his effectiveness.

It might well be that the supervisor effected more corrective measures under this category than the agent knew. It is indeed encouraging for supervisors to know that 91 per cent of the agents registered "very helpful" or "helpful" on this question.

Question No. 4. Did you feel that your supervisor had a

much better _____ (40%)

some better _____ (56%)

or no better _____ (4%)

understanding of your county programs and activities as a result of his having executed the Performance Review with you?

Keeping informed as to county extension programs and activities is one of the major problems confronting a supervisor. It is difficult to effectively assist county agents with their county programs if the supervisor is not sufficiently familiar with their programs. The agents' response definitely indicates that they felt the supervisors understand the county's programs better as a result of the Performance Review. The morale of an agent should be favorably affected by the knowledge that his supervisor has a good understanding of his work in the county.

Question No. 5. Did the Performance Review result in your knowing

your supervisor much better _____ (14%)

better _____ (61%)

or no better _____ (25%)

than before the interview?

Seemingly the Performance Review was quite successful, in the opinion of the agents, as a medium for becoming better acquainted with their supervisor. Probably part of the twenty-five per cent who indicated "no better" were in the category of one agent who penciled this remark below question five, "I knew him well before." It should be pointed out that prior to their appointment as supervisors all of the District Extension Supervisors were either county extension agents or a state 4H staff member. Consequently, all were well known by many of the agents.

Question No. 6. Do you feel that the Performance Review
experience will help you very much _____ (18%)
some _____ (73%)
or none _____ (9%)
in improving your effectiveness as a county extension agent?

It was encouraging to learn that 91 per cent of the 77 agents returning questionnaires thought the Performance Review either helped them "very much" or helped them "some" in becoming more effective in their work. Exchanging views on programs, activities, method and techniques adds to the abilities of the personnel participating.

Question No. 7. Did the Performance Review experience help you

very much _____ (17%)

some _____ (64%)

or none _____ (19%)

in pointing out areas of needed training that will aid you in planning a professional improvement program?

There was a wide variation of opinions relative to the assistance this instrument provided by way of indicating areas of needed training. At least two instances were pointed up where the instrument proved very effective in this regard. In these instances the agents recognized this deficiency in long-range program development. Both indicated that they intended to take an extension summer school course in program development.

Follow-up conferences with agents on their deficient areas as recorded in the guide will result in additional planned professional improvement. Helping agents keep current, effective and recognized as an agricultural or home economics leader in his or her county is a challenge to the supervisor. Frequently, agents are so close to their problems that they do not realize the need for training. Supervisors must recognize that many agents will not consider training to improve their performance until they recognize that their performance is sub-standard.

Question No. 8. Did the Performance Review experience give you a

much better _____ (10%)

some better _____ (71%)

or no better _____ (19%)

understanding of your job?

The primary purpose of this instrument was to define the agent's job or role in each area under consideration. It might be called a standard of performance or even a partial job description. Slightly over a fourth of South Dakota's county agents have had seven years or less of county agent experience. Helping them to better understand their job was an important purpose of this instrument.

Supervisors would like to have seen the percentage higher in the "much better" area. They hoped that the reason for nineteen per cent indicating "no better" was that the agents possess a thorough understanding of their job.

Question No. 9. Will the Performance Review experience cause you

to make many changes _____ (12%)

few changes _____ (80%)

or no changes _____ (8%)

in methods and procedures of doing extension work?

If 92 per cent of South Dakota's county extension agents make improvements in their methods and procedures of doing extension

work as a result of having had their performance reviewed by and with their supervisor, the composite results should be very noticeable. A surprisingly small number, eight per cent, indicated no change.

Question No. 10. Do you think the Performance Review has

much value _____ (25%)

some value _____ (69%)

or no value _____ (6%)

as a performance evaluation instrument?

Judging from the favorable response that the agents gave this question, the supervisors should have reason to place added confidence in the performance evaluation of this instrument. It is particularly encouraging since improvement and changes are needed. Evaluation reveals the need.

Question No. 11. As a result of the Performance Review experience,

do you feel much more _____ (13%)

some more _____ (59%)

or no more _____ (28%)

confident in your ability to perform your job effectively?

The agents' response to this question was surprising. One might expect that the agents' confidence to perform his job effectively would follow very closely question eight relating to the

instrument's assistance in helping agents better understand their job. Seemingly, agents felt that the Review was more effective in helping them to understand their job than giving them confidence in performing it. It has been said "confidence is born of knowledge." If agents felt the instrument was very useful in helping them to understand their job, greater confidence should come with time and application of increased understanding.

Question No. 12. Did the Performance Review experience cause you

to identify many _____ (9%)

some _____ (87%)

or no _____ (4%)

weaknesses in the performance of your responsibilities as a county extension agent?

It would seem that if the Performance Review was instrumental in identifying "many" or "some" weaknesses in the programs and activities of 96 per cent of South Dakota's county extension agents reporting, the time and expense incurred in conducting the Review was well spent. It is recognized that weak or inadequate programs cannot be made strong and effective unless and until the areas of weaknesses are identified. This, it seems, makes the favorable response to this question significant.

Question No. 13. Did you receive much _____ (23%)
 some _____ (63%)
 or no _____ (14%)

satisfaction from the high ratings recorded on the Performance Review?

Inasmuch as the desire for recognition is one of the basic wants of humans, recognition of good performance via this Review should have a distinct motivating effect. Agents whose performance has been reviewed know how well they are doing. As was brought out in Chapter II, knowledge as to how one is doing serves as a stimulus to agents to be more effective and to seek ways of improving one's work. Question 13 indicates that agents did receive satisfaction from favorable ratings.

Question No. 14. Did the Performance Review give you a
 very good _____ (52%)
 fair _____ (44%)
 or poor _____ (4%)
 understanding of the standards of performance?

It was gratifying to learn that such a high percentage of the agents indicated that a review of their performance helped them to better understand what was expected of them. It is obvious that an agent will make the greatest improvement in performance when he has standards of performance upon which to judge performance.

Question No. 15. Is the Performance Review written

too specifically _____ (13%)

about right _____ (74%)

or too general _____ (13%)

to best serve the evaluation purpose for which it was developed?

It may be of interest to note that several questionnaires contained side-line comments relative to this question. Most comments suggested that certain sections or areas of the review were too general or too specific. A rather consistent comment was that area VI, "Evidence of Effective Educational Work", was difficult to understand. The supervisors agreed after having used the instrument that several sections needed to be partly rewritten before the instrument was to be used again.

Question No. 16. Assuming that you found the Performance Review beneficial to you in better understanding your role as a county extension agent, would you recommend that it be used with an extension worker the first year _____ (33%)

second year _____ (40%)

third year _____ (27%)

after having assumed full responsibilities of a regular county extension agent.

An older county extension agent remarked during the interview, "What I wouldn't have given to have had an opportunity to go

over something like this with my supervisor when I started in extension work."

The general concensus of agents tends toward exposing county extension workers to a performance review relatively early in their career. Perhaps the most remunerative time would be immediately following an agent's first year as a regular extension agent. At that time he would have been exposed to most of the problems confronting a county extension agent, and he should be receptive and flexible in his attitudes and interests.

Question No. 17. If the Performance Review were used without rating during an agent's training period, would you recommend that it be used with an assistant agent or new home agent

before he or she goes on the job _____ (15%)

during the first year _____ (45%)

or during the second year? _____ (40%)

The assistant or associate agent who does not have the responsibility of managing a county extension office was considered in question 17. The essence of this question was whether the standards of performance paragraphs relating to the various sections contained in the Review should be reviewed and explained to agents in training, and if so, when? In this case emphasis is placed on the training aspect of the instrument. The agents are divided as to the most appropriate period but, in general, they were in favor of

an assistant agent gaining more experience prior to his being exposed to a performance review training session.

Question No. 18. Should the Performance Review items be

read aloud _____ (88%)

or silently? _____ (12%)

The supervisors discussed the matter of reading the review aloud versus reading it silently prior to taking the instrument to the field. It was mutually agreed that the supervisors would experiment on this aspect of conducting the review. According to question 18, oral reading proved more successful than where review participants read the review silently.

From the standpoint of the supervisors, oral reading provided a valuable opportunity for commenting and adding to the written material in the Review. This discussion or expanding feature would not be convenient or natural if all concerned read to themselves. However, several agents commented that reading orally was too time consuming.

Question No. 19. If you indicated "aloud" above, should the

supervisor read the review items _____ (33%)

the agent read the review items _____ (20%)

or should they alternate with the agent reading above the rating structure and the supervisor reading below the rating structure?

_____ (47%)

Inasmuch as the supervisor's trial run indicated a preference for oral reading, it was expected that this would be the method generally followed; hence question 19. The general consensus here was that the supervisor should be in command and given an opportunity to expand on points introduced by the Review where and when opportunities were presented. Alternate reading has the advantages of sharing the reading task and the agent becomes more extensively involved in the Review. The supervisor had ample opportunity to comment by being the oral reader of the statements below the rating structure. The reading of the criteria paragraphs also provided ample opportunity for the supervisor to refer to the standards of performance read by the agent.

Question No. 20. Was the time spent discussing the Performance

Review items very adequate _____ (47%)

adequate _____ (47%)

or inadequate? _____ (6%)

During an evaluation conference of supervisors following the reviews it was learned that six hours was the average amount of time needed to review an agent's performance. Apparently, the agents were well satisfied with this aspect of the Performance Review.

Question No. 21. Should Performance Review be done

every year _____ (11%)
 every other year _____ (39%)
 or at less frequent intervals? _____ (50%)

The Performance Review was prepared under the assumption that the Review would be conducted every year. However, the majority of the agents feel that it is not necessary to conduct it every year. The rapid agricultural and sociological changes taking place in South Dakota would tend to reduce the time interval between Reviews.

Question No. 22. Should the final rating of the Performance Review

items be decided by the agent _____ (4%)
 by the supervisor _____ (5%)
 or by mutual agreement of both agent and supervisor? _____ (91%)

The results here show that the agent wants the judgement and counsel of his or her supervisor. As mentioned previously, the agent wants to know how he is doing. Here is an opportunity for the agent to learn how the supervisor evaluates his performance. The agent, also, has an opportunity to justify or present reasons for what might appear as inadequate performance.

Question No. 23. Did you feel the supervisor influenced the

Performance Review rating too much _____ (3%)

about right _____ (95%)

or not enough? _____ (2%)

The results of this question are so unanimous that all supervisors have some assurance that they did not over or under influence the agent's rating. It is obvious, also, that the agents did not consider supervisors autocratic in establishing ratings. To put it another way, the agents felt that they were satisfactorily involved in establishing their Review ratings.

Question No. 24. In retrospect do you feel your rating was

too high _____ (7%)

about right _____ (90%)

or too low? _____ (3%)

The percentages indicate that agents, in general, felt they were treated fairly as to the rating received on their Performance Review. The agents were specifically informed at the start of the review that this instrument would not be used for purposes of making salary adjustments. They were informed that if they insisted on an unrealistic rating they would only be deceiving themselves.

The questionnaire was developed to require a minimum amount of the agents' time. In retrospect the questionnaire might have

been improved by having provided opportunity for comments after each question. Comments would have been particularly useful from the standpoint of rewriting or improving the instrument. Even with no space provided for comments a number of the returned questionnaires carried constructive comments in the margins. The remarks were usually very meaningful and pointed.

Agents were asked not to sign their questionnaires. A few questionnaires were marked negatively throughout, that is, they were consistently checked in the spaces indicating "no change", etc. In the absence of the signature one can only guess the reasons for the negative response. Had these agents been given an opportunity to include remarks, they may have given clues as to why they felt as they did.

In general, favorable to very favorable responses were received to questions relating directly to the objectives and purposes of this instrument. The positive response to important or key questions was mentioned from time to time as the questions were discussed.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The desire for a supervisory training tool to increase the competence and effectiveness of county extension agents was one of the primary reasons for undertaking this study. Stress was placed throughout the writing of this instrument on ways and means whereby an agent could become more effective in identifying, educating and training county leaders. The identification of training needs, suggestions leading to greater effectiveness and the application of extension teaching methods were natural consequences of reviewing the performance of county extension agents.

It is very probable that the future will bring more changes and at an accelerated rate. One of the biggest "challenges of change" for an extension worker is to be able to anticipate changes before they occur and to become sufficiently trained to provide educational leadership in molding and directing change. This instrument as evidenced by the evaluation survey, helped agents to identify areas of needed training. Training programs, supervisory plans of work and individual agent assistance now taking place should be helpful in causing agents to do a more effective job in molding sociological and economic changes taking place in South Dakota.

On-the-job performance of 92 county extension agents was reviewed by their respective supervisors during the late fall of 1962 and the early winter of 1962-63. Three supervisors of county agricultural agents and two supervisors of home demonstration agents along with the author worked together in preparing this instrument and in conducting the interviews. A committee of four agricultural agents and five home demonstration agents elected by members of their respective associations and representing all South Dakota supervisory districts spent a total of fifteen hours with the writer in preparing this instrument.

The review of an agent's performance required an average of approximately six hours. The writer spent from eight and ten hours with some agents. County extension agents having been in that position one to two years appeared to be more receptive. They also asked the greatest number of questions. Generally the discussion comments by agents with ten or more years of experience leaned more heavily toward defending existing methods and practices than toward discussing how a more effective practice or method might be adopted.

The writer found agent reception and participation excellent. From a supervisory point of view the Review was very effective for introducing ideas and suggestions for improving performance of agents. Also, it was a practical and effective means of obtaining a complete and comprehensive look at the whole county extension

program. Segmented program reviews such as are often done during office conferences can be very misleading to a supervisor from an evaluation point of view.

Conclusions

The author was cognizant of the need for brevity and simplicity throughout the preparation and writing of the instrument. Methods, programs and principals needing emphasis, but which were not explained in full by the instrument for want of brevity, were expanded upon by discussion during the course of interviewing an agent. It was felt that this instrument should introduce and provide key remarks or statements of standards relative to the main points under each section.

Experience in the use of this instrument further emphasized the need for brevity and a reliance on discussion to communicate ideas and suggestions. The five to seven hours required to adequately review an agent's over-all performance were too time consuming to consider its use every year with all agents. The consensus of the supervisors was that an agent's over-all performance should be reviewed every other year. During in-between years supervisors might well give individual assistance to agents whose performance review indicates the need for special training and assistance.

The state-wide experience with the Performance Review instrument has revealed its potential as a guide for preparing the supervisor's annual "Plan of Work." In analyzing the agents' ratings

in the performance review by the district supervisors, it became evident that some performance deficiencies were very pronounced. For example, the supervisors estimated that over 80 per cent of their agents rated average or below average in "Developing the County Programs." As a result of this observation, in-service training programs are being planned to assist agents in this area. Supervisors can be more exacting and effective in conducting, or advising those who do conduct, in-service training programs as to the kind or kinds of training needed.

This instrument provides supervisors with the opportunity to use and perfect the counseling technique to the end that agents will recognize areas of sub-standard performance and be motivated to take corrective action. Remedial action will be enhanced if needed corrective measures are recorded, complete with timetable, as a part of this review.

Some thought has been given to reducing this instrument to an outline, and hence relying more extensively on comments and discussion. Such an outline form of the Review might be used with success with experienced agents with whom the more comprehensive Performance Review instrument had been previously used.

Little difficulty by way of suspicion or resistance by agents was, or is likely to be, experienced with this type of a personnel appraisal instrument when those concerned with its use are involved in its preparation. Although this instrument was designed to

evaluate an agent's performance, it also served very effectively as a training and professional improvement tool. If, however, an instrument is to be used for salary adjustment and promotion purposes as brought out by Chambers in the forepart of Chapter II, the chances of a dip in morale due to lack of understanding or misunderstanding are much more likely to occur. The use of the instrument prepared here can serve to pave the way for the use of the more controversial salary and promotion type of instrument should such an instrument be desired.

The author believes that this instrument possesses several features of value in measuring the agent's level of performance and in motivating him to improve where weaknesses are discovered. These features are: 1. The agent learns what is expected of him as standards of performance are discussed. 2. There is a direct face to face discussion between the supervisor and the agent as the agent's performance is reviewed. This permits the agent an opportunity to discuss his programs directly with his supervisor. In this way the degree of performance can be more accurately determined. Greater understanding should be reached between supervisor and agent. 3. The agent and supervisor get to know each other better. 4. The agent learns ways in which his areas of weaknesses may be strengthened. 5. The agent learns the strong features of his program. 6. The agent learns how well he is doing--an element of doubt may be removed. 7. The agent has an opportunity to

explain to his supervisor why his programs fall short of accepted standards--there may be good reasons. 8. The agent has had a part in establishing goals or standards on which he, in part, rates himself.

An analysis of the evaluation survey conducted among county agents following the use of the instrument was presented in the previous chapter.

A few general conclusions can be drawn from the agent's point of view. Over 95 per cent of the 77 agents returning questionnaires felt that the instrument was helpful or very helpful as: (1) a medium for introducing and discussing county programs and activities; (2) a means of acquainting their supervisor with their county programs and activities; (3) a means of uncovering weaknesses in their county's program; and as (4) a means of gaining an understanding of Extension performance standards.

Ninety-four per cent of the 77 agents said that the instrument had much or some value as a performance evaluation instrument. A large majority, 88 per cent, favored reading the various sections aloud rather than each participant reviewing the sections silently. It was the writer's experience that discussion of the instrument sections came more naturally and freely when the agent and supervisor alternated in the oral reading of the instrument sections.

Over 90 per cent of the agents desired that the final performance ratings be a mutual decision between supervisor and agent. Also, over 90 per cent of the agents were satisfied with the ratings they received. More agents thought their ratings were too high than thought their ratings were too low.

In general, the "no better" and "no help" answers were confined to only a few questionnaires.

Copies of South Dakota Circular 614, "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents," may be secured from the bulletin room at South Dakota State College. A limited number were printed, as it was the consensus of the supervisors that actual use of the Instrument would reveal deficiencies, and hence a desire to make corrective changes. As was anticipated, the supervisors were in agreement that several changes in the printed Review were desirable. Based upon the suggestions of Extension Supervisors and County extension agents, a revised copy of the original Instrument has been prepared by the author. As of this writing, the revised copy has not been examined in detail and approved by the other supervisors. The 1963 supervisory Plan of Work calls for a detailed analysis by all supervisors of this Guide in furtherance of printing a revised copy for reviewing agents' performance in 1964.

The author does not anticipate that drastic changes will be made in the revised copy of the Guide as compared with the

original. The greatest change will probably be in rewriting parts of sections of the Guide in an attempt to simplify and to bring about greater understanding.

Additional uses for the Performance Review Guide have been found. One is that of using it as a training guide for assistant county agents or agents in training. Another is that of using the information in Area IV, "Developing the County Program, " in teaching county extension board members the role of the Extension Service in this important area.

Generally speaking, the Guide was well received. It fulfilled the purpose for which it was written. Anticipated changes are relatively minor. The revised copy is expected to be basically the same as the copy prepared as a part of this thesis.

The experience in writing "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents" has been very educational to the author. The use of the Guide has given the author an opportunity to become familiar with the Extension programs and activities of the counties in his district. It has also provided an opportunity for the author to become well acquainted with the agents under his supervision. It is the author's opinion that the greater familiarity with the agents in his district and with their programs has increased his effectiveness as an Extension supervisor.

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A reproduction of your questionnaire will be included in the Annual Report of Project Agreement No. VIII, which report is due February 15. Project Agreement No. VIII is entitled, "Organization and Supervision of County Extension Agents." It is a part of the Annual Report required of the county offices.

2. "Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents" is a part of my M. S. thesis. The thesis outlines a plan for an evaluation (administration of questionnaire) by County Extension agents who have received this training instrument with their reviews. A similar evaluation questionnaire will be completed by supervisors. I plan to have my thesis completed by June 1, 1964.

3. The present Performance Review will be revised before being used again. Your questionnaire will undoubtedly play a major part in making needed changes in the revised form.

Each County Extension supervisor supplied us with a list of Agents with whom they have completed a Performance Review. You are being sent this booklet with the hope your name was on one of these lists. In a few days, the list will be updated with all of the Performance Review forms you have completed so it was thought you had several things to write on to fill out the questionnaire reasonably well.

As supervisor of the most of the questionnaire, we are not interested in your signature. We are interested in the most-all manner, not in the completion of individual agents.

If you are returning this filled-in questionnaire within the next few days, it will be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Anderson
District Extension Supervisor

APPENDIX A

February 4, 1963

Dear Extension Worker:

Within the last six or eight months you and your Extension supervisor reviewed in some detail Extension Cir. 614 entitled, "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents." I would appreciate very much your filling out the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me within one week. Your completed questionnaire is important for at least three reasons:

1. A summarization of your questionnaire will be included in the Annual Report of Project Agreement No. VIII, which report is due February 15. Project Agreement No. VIII is entitled, "Organization and Supervision of County Extension Work." It is a part of the Annual Report required of the state office.
2. "A Guide for the Performance Review of County Extension Agents" is a part of my M. S. thesis. The thesis outline calls for an evaluation (summarization of questionnaire) by County Extension agents who have reviewed this training instrument with their supervisor. A similar evaluation questionnaire will be completed by supervisors. I plan to have my thesis completed by June 1, 1963.
3. The present Performance Review will be revised before being used again. Your questionnaire will undoubtedly play a major part in making needed changes in the revised form.

Each Extension Supervisor supplied me with a list of agents with whom they have conducted a Performance Review. You are being sent this questionnaire because your name was on one of these lists. In a few cases you may not have completed all of the Performance Review but your name is included as it was thought you had covered enough to enable you to fill out the questionnaire reasonably well.

As suggested at the close of the questionnaire, we are not interested in your signature. We are interested in the over-all summary, not in the evaluation of individual agents.

Again, your returning this filled-in questionnaire within the next three or four days will be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Cecil D. Sanderson
District Extension Supervisor

CDS/1h

APPENDIX B

COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THEIR PARTICIPATION
IN THE "PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS."

1. Did you look forward to__were willing to__or had some misgivings about__participating in the Performance Review.
2. Did you feel the Performance Review was very helpful__helpful__or of no help__as a media for introducing and discussing County Programs and activities.
3. Did you feel that the Performance Review was very helpful__helpful__or of no help__as a media for introducing and discussing personal problems relating to your work.
4. Did you feel that your supervisor had a much better__some better__or no better__understanding of your county programs and activities as a result of his executing the Performance Review with you.
5. Did the Performance Review session result in your knowing your supervisor much better__better__or no better__than before the interview.
6. Do you feel that the Performance Review experience will help you very much__some__or none__in improving your effectiveness as a county extension agent.
7. Did the Performance Review experience help you very much__some__or none__in pointing out areas of needed training that will aid you in planning a professional improvement program.
8. Did the Performance Review experience give you a much better__some better__or no better__understanding of your job.
9. Will the Performance Review experience cause you to make many changes__few changes__or no changes__in methods and procedures of doing county extension work.
10. Do you think the Performance Review has much value__some value__or no value__as a performance evaluation instrument.
11. As a result of the Performance Review experience do you feel much more__some more__or no more__confident in your ability to perform your job effectively.

12. Did the Performance Review experience cause you to identify many some or no weaknesses in the performance of your responsibilities as a County Extension Agent.
13. Did you receive much some or no satisfaction from the high ratings recorded on the Performance Review.
14. Did the Performance Review give you a very good fair or poor understanding of the standards of performance expected of you as a County Extension Agent.
15. Is the Performance Review written too specific about right or too general to best serve the evaluation purpose for which it was developed.
16. Assuming that you found the Performance Review beneficial to you in better understanding your role as a County Extension Agent would you recommend that it be used with an Extension worker the first year second year or third year after having assumed full responsibilities of a regular County Extension Agent.
17. If the Performance Review were used without rating during an agent's training period would you recommend that it be used with an assistant agent or new home agent before he or she goes on the job during the first year or during the second year .
18. Should Performance Review items be read aloud or silently.
19. If you indicated "aloud" above should the supervisor read the review items the agent read the review items or should they alternate with the agent reading above the linegraph and the supervisor reading below the linegraph .
20. Was the time spent discussing the Performance Review items very adequate adequate or inadequate .
21. Should Performance Review be done every year every other year or at less frequent intervals.
22. Should the final rating of the Performance Review items be decided by the agent the supervisor or by mutual agreement of both agent and supervisor .
23. Did you feel the supervisor influenced the Performance Review rating too much about right or not enough .
24. In retrospect do you feel your rating was too high about right or too low .